

December 22-26, 2012

Please note that news sites update their hyperlinks, so it is advised that articles of interest be read soon as they might not be accessible later.

Detroit Free Press: Fitness academy for teenage lawbreakers is focus of new Michigan online video series 'Court Stories'

"When Otsego County Judge Mike Cooper puts teenage lawbreakers on probation, he may also require them to do push-ups, pull-ups and other physical exercises with their probation officer, a former military man who trained overweight and out-of-shape soldiers. Young offenders assigned to the Youth Fitness Academy also get life lessons -- balancing a checkbook, buying a car, using hand and power tools, growing vegetables and raising chickens."

[Full story](#)

Also see:

***Court Stories*, new online video series about Michigan courts, debuts today**

[Press release](#)

Detroit Free Press: Twins conceived after dad's death ineligible for benefits, Michigan Supreme Court rules

"Twins from Portage who were artificially conceived after their father's death are not eligible to collect survivor benefits from the Social Security Administration, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled Friday. When Jeffrey Mattison got sick, he froze some of his sperm so the chemotherapy he was about to undergo wouldn't prevent him and his wife, Pamela Mattison, from having more children."

[Full story](#)

Also see:

The Detroit News: Mich. Supreme Court says kids aren't heirs in frozen sperm case

[Full story](#)

Note: The article also ran in the Battle Creek Enquirer, Lansing State Journal and the Traverse City Record-Eagle.

Kalamazoo Gazette: Michigan Supreme Court rules against Portage twins conceived with frozen sperm who are seeking Social Security survivor benefits

[Full story](#)

The Detroit News: New trial ordered for ex-Chrysler engineer convicted of sexual assault

"A new trial has been ordered for a 76-year-old retired Chrysler engineer recently released from prison after serving nearly seven years of a 15-year prison term for criminal sexual assault he claims never happened.... The Michigan Supreme Court issued a ruling Friday [regarding Jacob Trakhtenberg.]"

[Full story](#)

The Detroit News: Woman with broken ankle on M-22 can sue MDOT

"A Michigan appeals court has ruled in favor of a woman with a broken ankle, saying it's the state's responsibility to take care of a parallel parking lane on a popular stretch of M-22 in Suttons Bay. Helen Yono, a 69-year-old from Livonia, was shopping in Suttons Bay. While returning to her car, she stepped into a depression and broke her ankle."

[Full story](#)

Also see:

The Alpena News: Court: Woman may sue MDOT

[Full story](#)

Detroit Free Press: Annette Kay Stanfield Spinks: Pioneering jurist cared for others

"To the legal profession, she was a pioneer for African- American women.... Annette Kay Stanfield Spinks, a Detroit native who rose through the ranks of the legal profession to become the first African-American female jurist in Oakland County, died [December 19] on her 60th birthday."

[Full story](#)

The Detroit News: Court strikes pot blood test; It rules state didn't prove test accurate

"A Mason district judge has ruled blood tests on a motorist to determine marijuana presence cannot be used in a case because the head of the Michigan State Police crime laboratory's toxicology unit couldn't convince the judge that testing procedures were 'scientifically sound.'... Defense attorney Michael Nichols, who represents the motorist [Jon Goodburn], said the Ingham County case could affect prosecutions statewide of drivers suspected of operating under the influence of marijuana."

[Full story](#)

Also see:

Lansing State Journal: Ingham judge tosses police blood testing evidence in marijuana case

[Full story](#)

**** The article is available by subscription only.**

The Detroit News: Judge sentences 'architect of death,' 3 others in Hamtramck murders

"After calling one man a 'merciless mercenary' and another a 'disciple of destruction,' [Wayne County Circuit Judge Vonda Evans] on Friday handed down life sentences to three men and lengthy prison time to a fourth in the murders of two young Hamtramck women."

[Full story](#)

Also see:

Detroit Free Press: Families of 2 slain Hamtramck women confront their killers

[Full story](#)

Associated Press: Judge orders life sentences in deaths of 2 Hamtramck women

[Full story](#)

Detroit Free Press: Joseph Gentz's guilty plea in Jane Bashara's death could lead to charges for husband

"... [Joseph] Gentz, who wore a tan suit, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the January death of Grosse Pointe Park businesswoman Jane Bashara. He told Wayne County Circuit Judge Vonda Evans that he killed Bashara and that her husband threatened him if he didn't go through with it."

[Full story](#)

Also see:

The Detroit News: Handyman pleads guilty in Bashara murder case; Gentz: Her husband used threats, offered money to kill wife

[Full story](#)

Daily Press & Argus: Livingston magistrate always looked for the good in people

"Livingston County Magistrate Brian Brown believes that people who appeared in his hearing room for traffic violations and arraignments are 'good people who made a mistake.'... The Midland native is retiring this month after 17 years on the bench. Those who have worked with him say he leaves a legacy of integrity and of giving people respect."

[Full story](#)

Daily Press & Argus: Courthouses remain busy in 2012 with high-profile cases

"A Wixom man randomly shooting at motorists, a Detroitier who admitted he played a part in a grisly murder and a man who shot his friend topped Livingston County court-related news in 2012."

[Full story](#)

The Daily Tribune: 'Every day justice' mattered most to retiring Royal Oak judge

"The docket of Judge Daniel Sawicki has been heavy with sentences for petty criminals and disorderly conduct as he closes the last of the cases before him in 44th District Court. After 32 years, Sawicki has put in more time on the bench than most district court judges. The [Michigan] Constitution bans candidates from running for the position after their 70th birthday."

[Full story](#)

Detroit Legal News: Happy Trails

"... Among those who wished [Oakland County 46th District Court Judge Susan] Moiseev a happy upcoming retirement were judicial colleagues Oakland County 46th District Court Judge Bill Richards, Oakland County 45B District Court Judge Michelle Friedman Appel, Oakland County 47th District Court Chief Judge Marla Parker, and Oakland County 45th District Court Judge Jamie Wittenberg."

[Full story](#)

Note: The article also ran in the Oakland County Legal News.

Detroit Legal News: Profile in Brief: Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti

"Oakland County Probate Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti and her husband, Tom, gained a bit of family fame this summer, marking their golden wedding anniversary. It was a milestone, for sure. But 50 years of marriage somewhat pales in comparison to an even more noteworthy family occurrence this year for the distinguished Oakland County jurist."

[Full story](#)

Note: The article also ran in the Oakland County Legal News.

Detroit Legal News: Daily Briefs: Holiday Hours

"... The Michigan Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and the State Court Administrative Office will be closed for the holidays on Tuesday, Dec. 25; Monday, Dec. 31; and Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2013. The Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and SCAO will be open on Wednesday, Dec. 26; Thursday, Dec. 27; and Friday, Dec. 28."

[Full story](#)

Also see:

Supreme Court, Court of Appeals Announce Holiday Schedule

[Press release](#)

Flint-Genesee County Legal News: Time guidelines are part of real justice

State Court Administrator Chad C. Schmucker writes "In his guest column, 'Dashboard justice?' (December 17, 2012), attorney Mike Nichols charges that Michigan's courts are under 'arbitrary deadlines'

for timeliness, and he also seems to think that timeliness is the only performance measurement the Supreme Court wants the trial courts to apply.”

[Full story](#)

Flint-Genesee County Legal News: Scholarly Look: Judge pens a sequel to book on forensics

“Admittedly, Donald Shelton says his latest book was not written with The New York Times best-seller list in mind. Chief Judge of the Washtenaw County Trial Court, Shelton had a different audience in view when he set out to write, ‘Forensic Science Evidence: Can the Law Keep Up with Science?’ ”

[Full story](#)

Flint Journal: New court for Genesee County veterans dedicated to the late Dwayne Cherry

“Officials have dedicated a new Veterans Treatment Court to a former Mt. Morris Township soldier who suffered from post traumatic stress disorder before committing suicide less than a year ago. Chief Probate Court Judge Jennie Barkey announced the dedication to the late Dwayne Cherry during a ceremony today, Dec. 21”

[Full story](#)

Flint Journal: Genesee County Jail overcrowding emergency ends on Christmas Day

“... After 14 days of overcrowding, the Genesee County Circuit Court chief judge is required by state law to sort all sentenced prisoners into high-risk and non-high-risk categories. The judge then determines a minimum and maximum percentage by which the sentences for all of the non-high risk inmates may be reduced. The judge is also allowed to review unsentenced inmates and amend their bond or place them on tether.”

[Full story](#)

Lansing State Journal: Retiring Judge Paula Manderfield reflects on career, Ricky Holland case

“Six years later, the Ricky Holland case still can bring Judge Paula Manderfield to tears. The Ingham County circuit judge presided over months of pretrial hearings, a guilty plea from Ricky’s adoptive father, and the six-week trial of Ricky’s adoptive mother, who was convicted of murder.... [Judge Manderfield] served eight years on Lansing’s 54A District Court and nearly 12 years as a circuit judge.”

[Full story](#)

**** The article is available by subscription only.**

Lansing State Journal: Ex-Spartan football player says law firm forced him out; Dean Altobelli charges an abuse of power

“A former principal attorney at Miller Canfield [Dean Altobelli] alleges he was forced to give up his partial ownership in Michigan’s oldest and largest law firm because of abuse of power by managers there who promote a ‘culture of fear and intimidation.’... The case, which has other claims pending, is on emergency appeal before the Michigan Court of Appeals.”

[Full story](#)

**** The article is available by subscription only.**

Lansing State Journal: Lansing City Hall to be closed [this] week

“Lansing City Hall will be closed [this] week for an extended holiday break.... Lansing City Council’s office and 54A District Court also will be closed [from Monday December 24 until Tuesday January. 2].”

[Full story](#)

**** The article is available by subscription only.**

Macomb County Legal News: Court says no to collective growing of medical pot

"Michigan's medical-marijuana law does not allow a collective grow operation, the state Supreme Court ruled recently in the case of a Grand Rapids man [Ryan Bylsma] who gave warehouse space to others to raise pot. The unanimous decision provides more clarity about a 4-year-old law that was approved by voters by a wide margin but lacked details in key areas."

[Full story](#)

Macomb County Legal News: PALS members, guests ring in the holidays

"The Polish American Legal Society (PALS) held its Christmas Party recently at the American Polish Cultural Center in Troy. Congratulating Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Gerald Celeskey were Wayne County 19th District Court Chief Judge Richard Wygonik, PALS president, and Wayne County 20th District Court Chief Judge Mark Plawecki, PALS immediate past president."

[Full story](#)

The Macomb Daily: Macomb Country Drug Court participants, their children enjoy holiday gathering, Santa visit

"Macomb County Adult and Juvenile Drug Court participants and their children gathered for the program's annual Christmas celebration earlier this month at St. Claude Chapel in Clinton Township.... Participants interacted with program officials and staffers, including circuit court judges Diane Drzuzinski and Mary Chrzanowski, who preside over Adult Drug Court, and Kathryn Viviano, who presides over Juvenile Drug Court."

[Full story](#)

The Macomb Daily: Michael Cristini wants bigger settlement than Jeffrey Moldowan

"Since Michael Cristini wrongly served one more year in prison than his counterpart, Jeffrey Moldowan, he believes he deserves more than Moldowan received in a [federal] court settlement, according to his attorney.... Moldowan served 12 years and Cristini served 13 years before they were acquitted in jury retrials in 2003 and 2004, respectively, in Macomb County Circuit Court in Mount Clemens."

[Full story](#)

The Michigan View: A 2012 low for state Supreme Court

"One of the lows of the year 2012 surely must be the real estate contretemps involving state Supreme Court Justice Diane Hathaway. She and her husband are accused by the feds in a civil forfeiture suit of a phony ownership swap of their Florida home to hide the asset from the bank holding the mortgage on their Michigan home to get out of a \$600,000 debt."

[Full story](#)

MLive.com: Michigan Supreme Court: Muskegon judge wrong to order defendant's 86 guns given to mother

"The Michigan Supreme Court has ruled that a Muskegon County judge was wrong to order Fruitport Township police to turn over Kurtis Ray Minch's 86 legal firearms to Minch's mother after he was convicted of weapons felonies. The ruling reverses a Michigan Court of Appeals decision."

[Full story](#)

Oakland County Legal News: Trailblazer: Judge to retire in January after 24 years on the bench

"Judge Melinda Morris, who retires in January from the Washtenaw County Trial Court Civil/Criminal Division when her fourth 6-year term comes to a close, can look back over a long and illustrious career where she broke barriers, crashed the 'glass ceiling,' and blazed a trail for women in law."

[Full story](#)

Oakland County Legal News: Association to conduct Annual Worship service

"The Association of Black Judges of Michigan's Annual Worship Service will be held on Sunday, Feb. 10, at Messiah Missionary Baptist Church, 15 Park Ave. in Pontiac."

[Full story](#)

The Oakland Press: Adopted child brings Oakland County family Christmas joy WITH VIDEO

"Paul and Erica Stevenson have wanted to have a baby ever since they married more than 13 years ago. The Oakland County couple met at the church where Paul had grown up and Erica had joined when she came to the area to teach after graduating Michigan State University."

[Full story](#)